

Ms. McCollum of Minnesota: Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.Res. 1237 recognizing the historical significance of Juneteenth Independence Day.

I am honored to be a co-sponsor of this resolution, which celebrates the oldest national commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States and encourages us to use our understanding of history to more effectively face the challenges of the future.

Juneteenth began as a day to celebrate African-American freedom by commemorating the arrival of the news of the end of slavery in the frontier areas of the United States two years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. 143 years later, Juneteenth has taken on a much bigger cause: encouraging self-development and respect for all peoples and cultures. Juneteenth is a day for Americans of all races, ethnicities and religions to join together and reflect on a chapter in America's history that continues to cast a shadow on the American experience. It is also a time to recognize that while we cannot change history, we must learn from it and use its lessons to eradicate slavery and improve human rights around the world.

Unfortunately, slavery continues to exist in the Sudan, West African countries and elsewhere. In addition, millions of women and children are trafficked as forced laborers and sex workers throughout the world. At least 800,000 people are trafficked across borders worldwide each year, including an estimated 14,500 - 17,500 persons into the United States. When trafficking within countries is included, the total global figure rises as high as four million people, many of whom are women and children. The United States has both the moral obligation and the required resources to help end modern day slavery.

This Juneteenth, more than 60,000 Minnesotans will come together in my District for a festival and a parade celebrating African American history, cuisine and culture. Madam Speaker, I call on my colleagues to celebrate this Juneteenth by rededicating themselves to eliminating slavery, exploitation and racism in all forms from our world, and join me in supporting H.Res. 1237.